



News Release

WISCONSIN ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Public Affairs Office
2400 Wright Street
Madison, WI 53704

Contact: Lt. Col. Tim Donovan
608-242-3050
Cell: 608-516-1777

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Parade, Welcome Home Reception and Freedom Salute planned in Chippewa Falls Saturday for 264th Engineer Group

The Wisconsin Army National Guard's 264th Engineer Group is scheduled to be back in Chippewa Falls Saturday morning [Feb. 12] after serving more than 14 months on active duty and nearly one year in Iraq.

The unit's 80 soldiers are expected to arrive in Eau Claire at 9 a.m., then travel north on Highway 53 to the Chippewa Falls Mall, where a parade to the Chippewa County Courthouse will begin at 10 a.m.

Welcome Home Celebration

National Guard officials are planning a "welcome home" celebration for the unit members and their families at the Chippewa Falls Armory at noon. The public is invited and encouraged to attend.

Brig. Gen. Kerry Denson, commander of Wisconsin's 7,700-soldier Army National Guard, will lead the formal program. He will be joined by other senior National Guard officers and officials from Chippewa Falls and Chippewa County, the state legislature and United States Congress.

The welcome home celebration will be held on the drill floor of the Chippewa Falls armory, 2811 East Park Avenue, at 12:00 noon. Entertainment will be provided by the National Guard's 132nd Army Band of Madison.

Freedom Salute

Immediately following the welcome home reception, the unit will hold an Operation Freedom Salute ceremony to further recognize the 264th Engineer Group's soldiers, families and supporters. This nationwide campaign recognizes soldiers of the Army National Guard who served during Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The program also thanks families and community supporters.

Each redeploying soldier will receive an encased American flag, a lapel insignia, a commemorative coin and a certificate of appreciation from Lt. Gen. Roger Schultz, director of the Army National Guard of the United States. Spouses or significant others will receive a lapel insignia, while the soldiers' children will be presented footlocker kits which contain several games, Army National Guard trading cards and a comic book.

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Each soldier can also recognize one person who provided outstanding support to the soldier or soldier's family during the mobilization. This recognition consists of a medallion and a commemorative lapel insignia.

In addition, the unit will present a framed mosaic American flag print to the KI Corporation, Green Bay, in recognition of the company's support of the 264th's soldiers during the mobilization. Another special award, a 17-inch Minuteman statuette, will be presented to Jeff Bukowski, founder of Wisconsin We Care.

While in Iraq, the engineers operated from a forward operating base near Tikrit in the heart of the Sunni Triangle. They supported 368 engineer missions for the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division. The Wisconsin engineer group headquarters was responsible for \$192 million in construction funds, \$43 million in construction materials and \$15 million in concrete barriers erected to protect both U.S. soldiers and Iraqi citizens.

Following redeployment of the 264th Engineer Group, the Wisconsin Guard will still have about 1,570 soldiers and airmen on active duty. Of those, approximately 1,250 are currently deployed overseas.

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Note to Editors and News Directors: News media are welcome to cover these events Saturday. The parade is scheduled from 10 to 11 a.m., and both other events are at the Chippewa Falls armory beginning at 12 noon. The armory is located at 2811 East Park Avenue, Chippewa Falls.

Expected participants at the armory are Brig. Gen. Kerry Denson, Sen. Ron Brown, Sen. Dave Zien, Rep. Robin Kreibich, Rep. Scott Suder, and Chippewa Falls Mayor Douglas Sandvick. Several other officials have been invited but are not yet confirmed.

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